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Anzio Rescues Stranded Sailors

By: Ensign Colleen McDonald

The guided-missile cruiser USS Anzio (CG 68) responded to a distress call on May 20 from Amerauto, a 34 foot sailing vessel. The vessel was slowly sinking and the four crew members were transferred to Anzio.

The vessel and its Ukrainian crew of four had been underway for five days after departing Bermuda on May 15 headed for the Azores. Amerauto was 425 miles from Bermuda when they put out their distress call and 1,700 miles from their next destination of the Azores.

Initially bridge-to-bridge communications were difficult because the Ukrainian crew spoke little English, but fortunately Anzio has three personnel on board who are fluent in Russian.

Anzio's Navigator, Lt. j.g. Brian Gordon, Electronics Technician 2nd Class Eric Stoddard, and Gas Turbine Systems Technician (Electrical) 3rd Class Vladimir Moskovkin worked together as a team to communicate with Amerauto and discovered that the vessel had several issues, including that they were taking on water, their bilge pump was inoperable because of a casualty to their generator, one sailor was ill, they only had three days of food remaining on board and no propane to cook their food.

Moskovkin, born in Ufa, Russia, handled the majority of the bridge-to-bridge communications.

“The crew spoke perfect Russian. It was easy for me to understand. You could hear the desperation in their voices as they kept repeating that their situation was severe. They had no confidence in the hull of the sailboat,” said Moskovkin.

Anzio dispatched Gordon and Engineman 1st Class Gregory Fogle via small boat to assess the Amerauto’s seaworthiness. Upon arriving on board, it was clear that the crew was in distress and the vessel was in very poor condition.

“The vessel was taking on about 12 gallons of water per hour and their generator was shorted out, rendering their bilge pump useless. The only way they could get the water off their boat was by using buckets. They had no power and everything they were using was running on battery power,” said Gordon.

After Anzio’s representatives conducted an inspection and concurred that the Amerauto was unseaworthy, all four passengers were taken on board Anzio for medical care and a hot meal. One sailor was treated for dehydration upon arrival and all are currently doing well. They are currently remaining onboard Anzio as the ship heads back towards Va.

The four crewmembers had picked the Amerauto up in the Bahamas and were sailing it back to the Ukraine via St George, Bermuda and the Azores. They had left St. George, Bermuda on May 15 and were just on sail power. Amerauto is a United States flagged sailboat, registered in Newark, Delaware and owned by a United States-based Company.

“Throughout the course of our deployment, we have assisted four vessels in distress on the high seas. While it is an unfortunate circumstance for those individuals, I hope that this interaction has had a positive and lasting impact on the lives of those we have helped. In all four cases it may be the first and only interaction these mariners have with Americans and I think we

left them with a very positive impression that they will take back to their homes,” said Capt. Perry Bingham, Anzio’s Commanding Officer.

Anzio is transiting home to Norfolk, Virginia after an extended eight month deployment to the Commander, 5th Fleet Area of Responsibility in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

Anzio is part of the Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group, which also includes USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (CVN 69), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 7, embarked Destroyer Squadron 28; guided-missile destroyer USS Ramage (DDG 61); and guided-missile destroyer USS Mason (DDG 87). The strike group deployed Oct. 3, 2006, from Norfolk, Va.

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**NOTE: Media partners desiring more information about this event should contact the Second Fleet Public Affairs Office at (757) 443-9850 ext 47129.
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